



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Grand Canyon National Park
P.O. Box 129
Grand Canyon, Arizona 86023-0129

IN REPLY REFER TO:

D18 (GRCA 8211)

Dear Interested Party:

Subject: Rehabilitation of Mather Campground, Yavapai Observation Station, and Ranger Operations Building

Reference: Request for Comments on Initial Proposed Actions (General Scoping)

The National Park Service (NPS) is in the initial stages of planning for the rehabilitation of Mather Campground, the historic Yavapai Observation Station, and the historic Ranger Operations building, all located on the South Rim of Grand Canyon National Park (see attached map).

a. Mather Campground

1. Purpose and Need for Action: Mather Campground currently provides 326 year-round campsites for tents and recreation vehicles. This is the only facility to offer tent campsites in the vicinity of Grand Canyon Village. The purpose of the proposal is to provide universal accessibility and a high quality visitor experience within Mather Campground. Grand Canyon National Park 1995 General Management Plan (GMP) identifies that Mather Campground will be retained (page 34) and that there is a need for an enlargement and renovation of camper services (laundry, shower, restrooms). These proposals are intended to improve the overall experience of campground visitors. Direction in the GMP focuses on continued use of existing facilities and high-quality visitor services. The proposal is needed to address the following management concerns:

a) The six existing accessible campsites are not currently providing adequate facilities for visitors with disabilities and do not meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. They are clustered in one area of the campground, are too small and/or obstacles (rocks, gravel, uneven surfaces) are present in and around the sites. The campground is out of compliance with recently proposed guidelines by the U. S. Architectural and Transportation barriers Compliance Board (Access Board) for Outdoor Recreation Areas. Based on these guidelines, Mather Campground should have at least 12 universally accessible sites.

b) There are seven campsites along Juniper Loop that are in close proximity to South Entrance Road and to proposed transit corridors. In order to maintain a quality camping experience while also maintain campground capacity, these campsites need to be relocated to other areas within the campground that are not as close to the road or potential transit corridors. Implementation of this portion of the project would be dependent on the selection and implementation of a mass transit system.

c) Access to Mather Campground is via Market Plaza Road. Currently, as visitors turn onto the access road to the campground from Market Plaza Road, they have about 85 meters (275 ft) before they

must stop at the entrance kiosk to pay their campground fee. During busy times of the season, vehicles line up while waiting to pay. Vehicle lines often extend beyond the intersection with Market Plaza Road. This line of vehicles often blocks other vehicles from being able to enter the camper services building. These impacts to traffic flow in this small area are creating congestion and safety hazards. In addition, the current entrance kiosk is too small for current needs and is not compliant with current accessibility standards.

d) The 11 comfort stations within the campground are inadequate. The majority of them do not meet current accessibility standards, the nearly flat roofs do not shed snow and water effectively, and walkways and paths are deteriorated and do not meet accessibility standards. The comfort stations were built during the early 1960s and are in need of repairs and upgrading.

2. Proposed Action:

a) **Accessibility Upgrades:** Twelve to fifteen camping sites would be converted/rehabilitated to universally accessible camping sites. Accessible sites would be evenly distributed throughout the campground. All sites would meet ADA requirements and proposed guidelines by the U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board) for Outdoor Recreation areas. Accessible picnic tables, grills, and campsite signs would be added to each site. Work would include grading, replacing or widening parking space pavement, providing accessible pathways between campsites and comfort stations. Implementation of this portion of the project would at least double the number of accessible campsites in Mather Campground.

b) **Restroom Rehabilitation:** Eleven comfort stations within the campground would be rehabilitated. Rehabilitation would include making them universally accessible, including new floors, walls, windows, doors, interior finishes, and upgrading of plumbing and electrical fixtures. The new roofs would be conventional wood frames with 4-in-12 slopes. The exterior would be similar to the existing buildings with the exception of the new roofs. Entry doors would be moved to the front of the building, opening onto covered porches. Site work would include minimum repair and upgrading of paths and walkways.

c) **Campsite Relocations:** The “Oak Loop” would be expanded by constructing 13 new campsites. Nine campsites (two to accommodate the new expanded loop and seven along Juniper Loop) would be demolished and revegetated (see attached map for location of Oak and Juniper Loops). The construction of the new campsites would include some minor tree removal and clearing, grading, asphalt road construction, paving for campsite parking and the addition of picnic tables and fire grills.

d) **Entrance Reconfiguration:** The registration function the kiosk currently provides would be relocated to an existing modular building, and the kiosk would be removed. This modular building would be retained in its current location. A nearby shed would be relocated and about 0.5 acres of vegetation would be disturbed to accommodate a new parking area large enough for six recreational vehicles and 14 cars. If implemented, vehicles entering the campground would park in this new parking area and walk to the registration building to pay their fees and obtain information, instead of having to wait in line in their vehicles.

b. Yavapai Observation Station

1. **Purpose and Need:** Grand Canyon Association is currently using Yavapai Observation Station as a bookstore. This building was originally built in 1928 for the purpose of observing and understanding

the geology of the Grand Canyon. It is one of the earliest park museums and is of national significance in NPS architecture and interpretation. The approximately 3,000 square foot building is included on the NPS List of Classified Structures and was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1990. The Grand Canyon National Park 1995 General Management Plan identifies the Yavapai Observation Station as an interpretive facility. The GMP discusses this building in several areas (pages 30 – 32), identifies it as a museum/interpretive facility used primarily for viewing the canyon, and indicates that interpretive exhibits should focus on only selected themes (geology, physiography, and related topics).

In keeping with the direction outlined in the GMP, this project is intended to restore the Yavapai Observation Station to its original purpose. The building is located at a key point for viewing the canyon and observing the geological story. It is within walking distance of Canyon View Information Plaza and provides a perfect opportunity to interpret Grand Canyon geology once again. Some changes to the original building have occurred over time that have altered the building's original use and detract from its richness. These include tinted windows, heavy windowpanes, and a modified interior plan, among others. Current visitation rates at Yavapai Observation Station during peak use periods are estimated at 10,000 visitors daily. This visitation is expected to drop, possibly by as much as 75% (2,500 visitors daily) after the Heritage Education Campus is complete and a mass-transit system identified in the GMP is in operation. This is due to the fact that Yavapai Observation Station will continue to be a shuttle bus stop, but may no longer be a tour bus stop if, or when, the transit system and the Heritage Education Campus are implemented.

2. Proposed Action: The proposal would include two potential phases of implementation. The first phase would have two components:

a) All work necessary for the rehabilitation of the building. Repairs would include such actions as selective repointing of stone masonry, repairing and/or replacing log vigas, rehabilitation or compatible replacement of all windows and doors, installing new asphalt paving for universally accessible access surrounding the building, installing a sprinkler system and fire detection system; upgrading of heating, ventilation and air conditioning system (HVAC) and electrical systems; and replacement of the existing glazing (windows) on the observation deck with butt jointed glazing and removal of the mullions (solid vertical elements separating the existing windows). This would restore the view of the canyon by providing a continuous view no longer interrupted by mullions, thus more closely matching the original open view;

b) Installation of new exhibits. An interpretive plan has been developed for this project and would focus on providing a learning experience that facilitates a connection between the visitor and the unique geological resource of Grand Canyon. Exhibits would provide a multi-sensory visitor experience, utilizing graphic panels, text panels, simple and complex displays of interpretive objects, small dioramas, biological models, and a variety of simple interactive exhibits. Exhibits would focus on the roofed terrace and the exhibition hall, functions for interpretation similar to that used in 1928. The material selected for the exhibits would be in keeping with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and would be distinctive, but compatible with the historic building.

The park is currently exploring an option to implement a second phase of the project that focuses on the eventual restoration of the open-air terrace of the building. The second phase would include removing the observation deck windows and installing a fixed glazed wall at the south column line with an operable door in the center (see attached floor plan). This operable door could be held open during good weather and made operable during inclement weather. The enclosure of the original open-air observation deck with five large single pane picture windows occurred in 1953 (see attached photos). It is the park's

intention to restore, as completely as possible, the building's original integrity and purpose, while also meeting the current needs and uses of the building. Implementation of the second phase would be contingent upon the following parameter being met: visitation levels to Yavapai Observation Station drop from current levels (approximately 10,000 visitors daily) to approximately 2,500 people daily, when a mass transit system is in place and/or the Heritage Education Campus is functioning. Park staff has determined that immediate implementation of the second phase would likely result in circulation problems for visitors during current peak seasons by significantly reducing the interior space in the building. This option would be feasible, however, and desirable, if peak visitation levels drop significantly, as expected following mass transit implementation.

c. Ranger Operations Building

1. Purpose and Need for Action: The Historic Ranger Operations Building is a National Historic Landmark, originally constructed in 1929 to serve as park headquarters (see attached drawing), and is a prime example of early park rustic style architecture. It was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places in 1975, and obtained National Historic Landmark status in 1986. This 5,575 square foot building is in need of rehabilitation. Exterior rustic lap siding and exposed log elements are severely deteriorated and need stabilization to prevent further loss of historic fabric. Aged plumbing and mechanical systems are badly outdated and inefficient, and heating the building is highly energy-consumptive. The building does not meet all current accessibility, safety and fire codes. In addition, changes need to be made to the interior to accommodate a growing park ranger staff. All of these rehabilitation efforts are designed to preserve the historic features and elements of the building and maintain character-defining features, while improving the functionality and safety of the building for current uses.

2. Proposed Action: Extensive interior and exterior repairs and rehabilitation actions would be undertaken for this building. Exterior project components would include such things as spot repointing masonry mortar, replacing deteriorated wood siding and log rafters, replacing the shingle roof, removing and replacing the main entrance doors, replacing the heating system, replacing water and electrical lines, rehabilitating windows, and removing the metal awning from the second story windows. Interior project components would include such things as replacing plywood wall paneling with wood batten trim to match original materials, removing and replacing doors, restoring original scored concrete floor in the lobby, installing new security system, rehabilitation of bathrooms for accessibility needs, repairing and refinishing log siding, and modification of some of the interior non-historic walls to create more useable office and storage space. The work will also include upgrade of HVAC and electrical systems, installation of fire protection systems and seismic structural retrofit. The intent of the interior rehabilitation is to install historically sensitive finishes whenever possible.

To meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) code requirements, an accessible path would be provided to the south side entry door, and the door would be made accessible. Restrooms on the first floor would be upgraded to current ADA standards and a new restroom would be installed on the second floor. The second floor closet would be re-framed to allow increased head room at the bottom of the stair, and new handrails would be installed on the interior stair and at the front exterior steps.

A new exterior stairway would be installed at the south elevation to provide secondary egress from the second floor, to be compliant with building code. This would require installation of a new doorway at the south elevation on the second floor. This would bring the building up to current safety and fire codes. This stairway would be suitable for both routine and emergency use.

Before we begin the environmental analyses for these projects, we would like to hear your viewpoints on the actions, and any issues or concerns you have regarding the proposals. Please send your comments to the address below, or email Sara White, Compliance Officer, at sara_white@nps.gov no later than November 26, 2001.

Grand Canyon National Park/Superintendent
Attn: Sara White, Compliance Officer
P.O. Box 129
Grand Canyon, AZ 86023

Please be aware that names and addresses of respondents may be released if requested under the Freedom of Information Act. Our practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review during regular business hours. Individual respondents may request that we withhold their home address from the record, which we will honor to the extent allowable by law. There also may be circumstances in which we would withhold from the record a respondent's identity, as allowable by law. If you wish us to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comment. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection in their entirety. Anonymous comments may be included in the public record. However, the National Park Service is not legally required to consider or respond to anonymous comments.

We appreciate your input on these proposals. If you have any questions regarding the projects, please call Debbie Lutch, Environmental Protection Specialist, at (928) 774-0095 or Sara White, Compliance Officer, at (928) 638-7956.

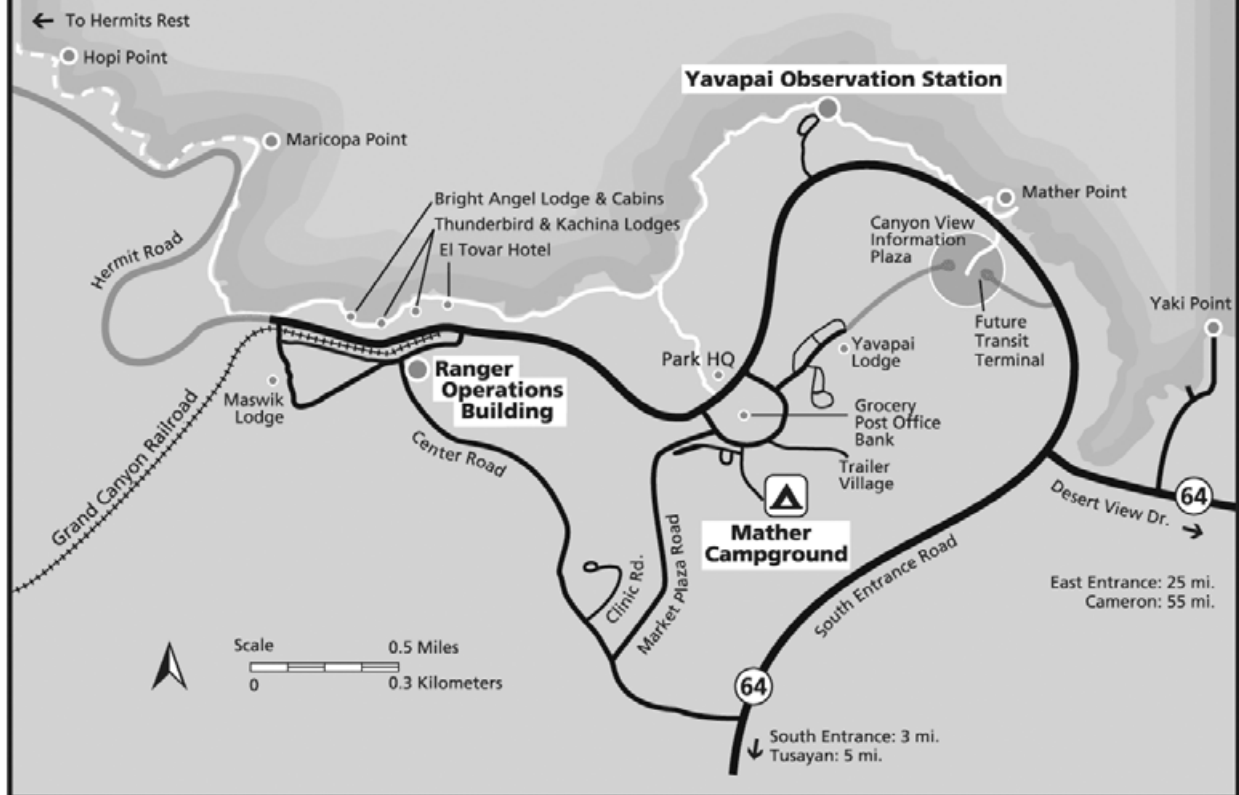
Sincerely,

Joseph F. Alston
Superintendent

Enclosures 5

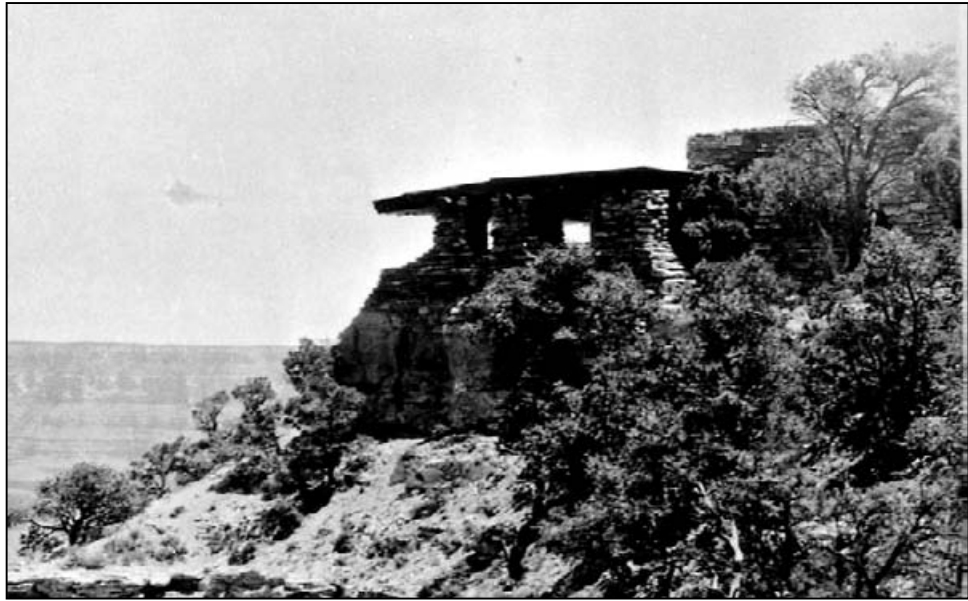
If you would like to receive a hard copy of any of the Environmental Assessments (EA) for these projects when they are complete, please contact Sara White at the address above, at (928) 638-7956, or at sara_white@nps.gov, and one will be sent to you during the comment period. If you do not respond to this request, a hard copy of the EA will not be sent to you. However, please be aware that these Environmental Assessments (when complete) and other environmental documents are routinely available for your review on the Grand Canyon National Park website at www.nps.gov/grca/mgmt/.

Grand Canyon Village, South Rim Grand Canyon National Park



Vicinity Map

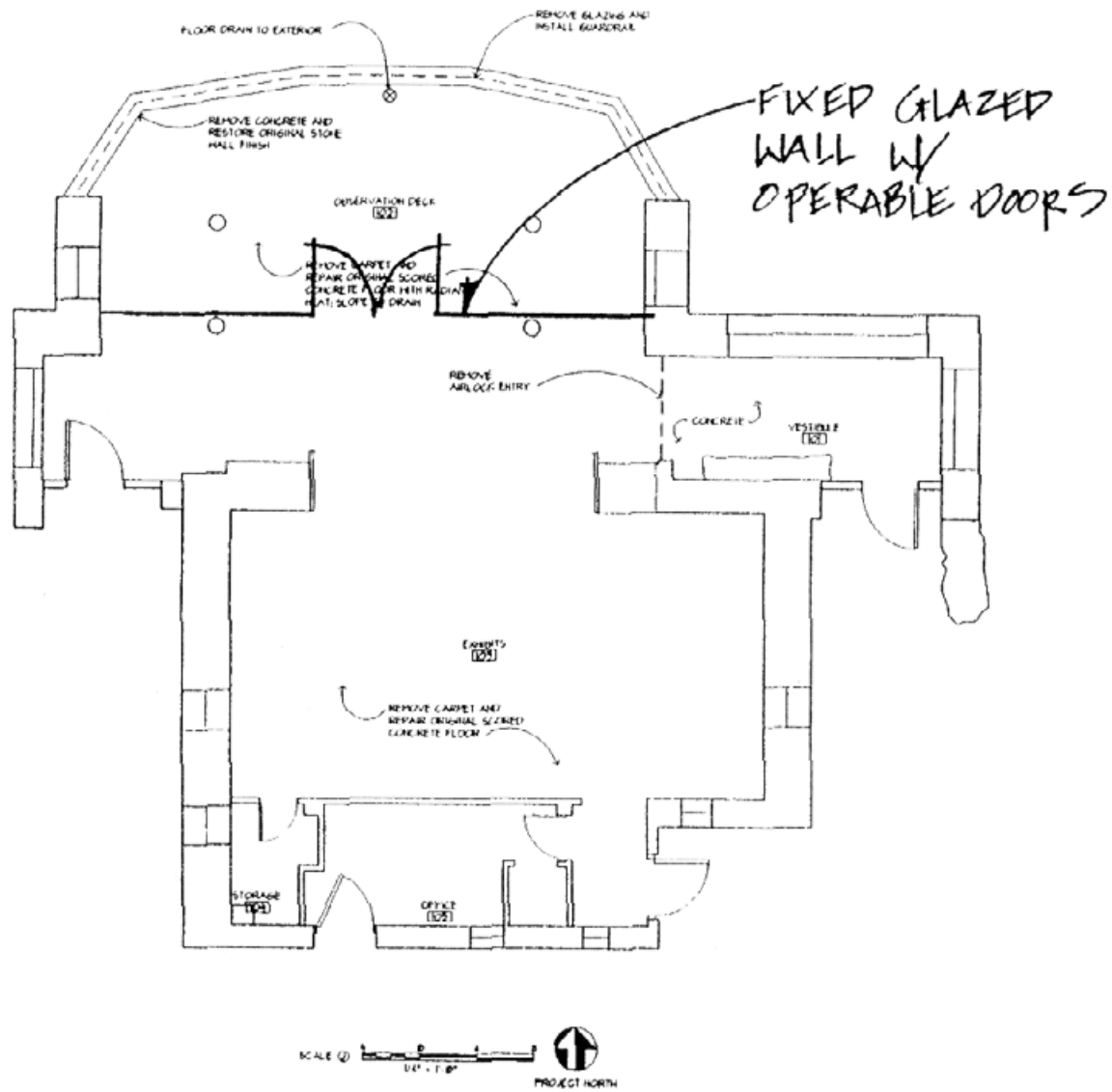




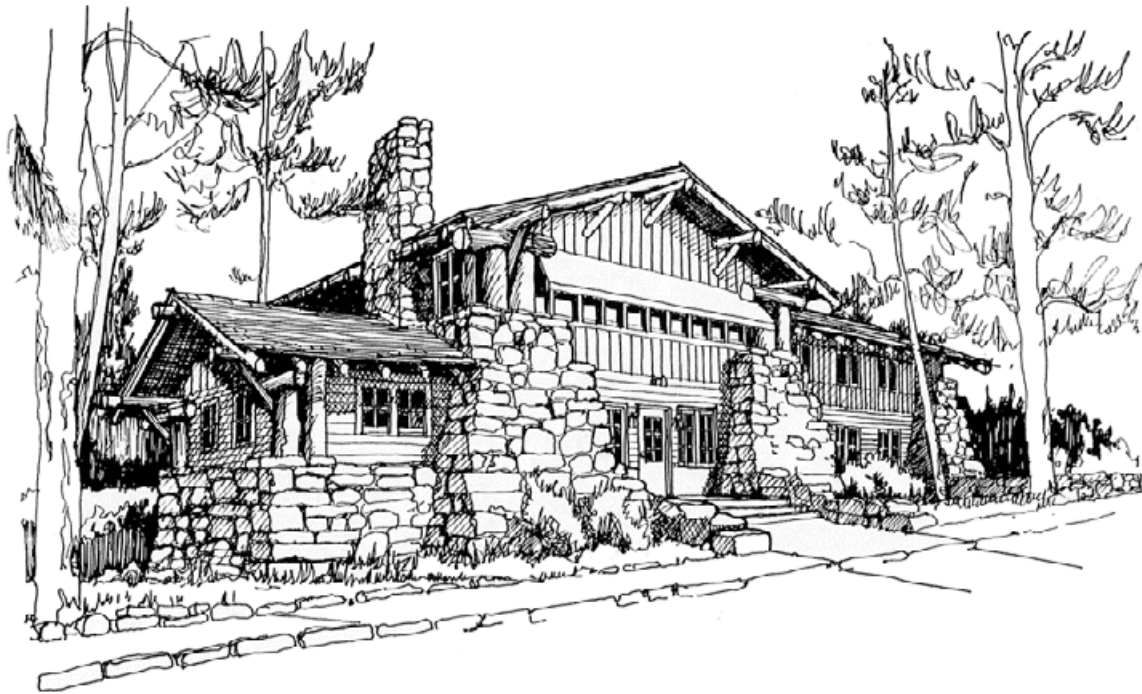
Yavapai Observation Station, west elevation before glazing - 1930



Yavapai Observation Station, west elevation after glazing - 1989



Yavapai interior floor plan



Drawing of the Ranger Operations Building